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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, October 11, 1943.

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Subject: "SEWING MACHINE CARE." Information from household equipment specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Sewing machine "clinics"--- run by extension workers in many states--- have lured many an old sewing machine out of its hiding-place in an attic or a closet and put it in good running order to do its part in saving wartime clothing. Some of these old sewing machines were idle because they seemed out of order when last used, and the owners did not know how to fix them. They ran hard or skipped stitches or puckered the cloth. Some of them were simply clogged with dust from disuse. They had been superseded by a newer model, perhaps one with an electric motor. Or the housewife may have bought more ready-made clothing and given up trying to do sewing herself.

At the clinics women have learned how to locate the troubles developed in their machines, and what to do about them. Owners of the machines are again making clothing at home, or remodeling useful garments, or at least making clothing repairs on these restored machines. They have loaned or donated many of them to Red Cross or community work-rooms.

True, comparatively few homemakers can take their machines to a "clinic". But like Mahomet and the mountain, if the machines won't come to the clinic there's a way of taking the clinic to the people who have these old machines. There's a way of reaching many who might never talk with an extension engineer personally. The household equipment specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and engineers of the Maryland Extension Service have collaborated recently on a new Farmers' Bulletin. In that Bulletin they describe the most common sewing machine troubles in detail, and tell what to do about

each one.

These specialists say that practically all well-made sewing machines can be made to run easily and sew perfectly, whether they are new or old, used constantly or idle. If you know how to do it, you can put even a very old machine into good running order--one that your grandmother used 50 years ago. Parts may need replacing, but machines will seldom wear out if you clean, oil, and adjust them regularly. The bulletin tells how to do these things for a lockstitch sewing machine, whether run by an electric motor or by a foot treadle. The information in the bulletin does not apply to chain stitch machines.

The cleaning, oiling, and adjusting isn't hard to do. It doesn't take special tools or much mechanical skill. The bulletin shows by drawings and diagrams just how the different parts of a machine look and work, and tells how to put the machine into service again. You can get a copy of this bulletin by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. The title of it is "Sewing Machines, Cleaning and Adjusting", and the number is 1944-F. It's free.

When you bought your sewing machine the manufacturer gave you a book of instructions for using it. But you may have lost this book. If you have, try to get another, because it will help you to clean the parts of your machine that are different from other makes. In writing to the manufacturer, give the name, serial number, and age of your machine.

But you can clean and adjust your machine without this book if you follow the directions in Farmers' Bulletin 1944 closely. Try to do the work somewhere out of the main line of family activities. It will take a little time, and you may have to leave the job and come back to it. So start the work where you can leave it until it is done. Place the machine so that a light comes over your left shoulder as you work. Turn back rugs, and use newspapers to protect the floor and nearest walls from oil and grease. Fold a newspaper

and tuck it into the cabinet space underneath the head of the machine.

For a thorough cleaning, here are some of the things you will need: A pie tin for small parts and cleaning fluid; a small and a large cabinet type screw driver; a knife, pliers, adjustable-end wrench, long needle or stilleto or some other sharp instrument; cleaning cloths, cloth for testing the stitch, sewing machine oil, cleaning fluid or kerosene. (Caution: Don't use gasoline indoors because it's highly inflammable. And never use gasoline that contains lead. Use the cleaning fluid in a small oil can.)

If your machine gives trouble, it's a safe rule to first clean the machine. Dust, grit, lint and thread collect easily on the working parts, and if not removed, will in time become a packed mass, soaked and gummed with oil, often making the machine jam or run hard.

If you have to unscrew certain parts of the machine head to get at the source of the trouble, take off only what you have to get at the part to be cleaned. You'd better arm yourself with that bulletin just mentioned before you start unscrewing parts and taking off nuts and bolts. Once more, the number is Farmers' Bulletin 1944, and the title, "Sewing Machines, Cleaning and Adjusting."

And follow the directions to the very end, especially noting that they say: "When you have oiled the machine and put back each part, run the machine with some waste cloth under the presser foot to absorb any excess oil. After you thread up the machine, run it over scraps of testing cloth until you're sure the thread is not oily."

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